



EBOLA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IOWA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Ebola Outbreak in West Africa continues to be in the headlines and recently, there has been extensive media coverage of the handful of cases that have occurred in the United States.

It's understandable that staff, parents and students may be concerned about this serious disease; however, it is important to ensure that fear does not take over and negatively impact the education of our students in Iowa. It is critical that all decisions that might lead to the exclusion of students or canceling of school are based upon sound science and health information, rather than panic and hysteria. For these reasons, Iowa Department of Public Health has developed the following recommendations.

1. Consult public health officials before making decisions that might lead to the exclusion of students or canceling of school.

Public health officials have the necessary scientific information and medical expertise for assessing who has been exposed (or potentially exposed) to the Ebola virus, determining what actions are appropriate such as isolation or quarantine, as well as having the legal authority to order these actions and ensuring those actions are carried out. **The priority of public health officials is to protect the communities they serve and stop serious infectious diseases from spreading.**

2. Do not exclude students just because someone in their household or a close contact recently returned from a country in Africa within the last 21 days where widespread transmission of Ebola is occurring (i.e. Guinea, Sierra Leone, or Liberia).

These students pose no risk to others at the school, and need to continue their education. Upon entry back into the U.S., returned travelers are thoroughly assessed by public health officials for risk and symptoms, then appropriate public health actions are ordered; at a minimum, all these returned travelers will be assessed twice daily to ensure they remain well. If an Iowa student is found to have been exposed to a household member or a close contact who became ill with Ebola, the student will be put into quarantine immediately, and before they could potentially spread this virus to others or contaminate the environment.

3. Do not exclude students who travel to countries in Africa where widespread transmission of Ebola is **NOT occurring. (As of Nov. 4, widespread transmission of Ebola is only occurring in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.)**

Persons who travel to other areas of Africa or other areas of the world (where widespread transmission of Ebola is **NOT** occurring) are at no greater risk of developing Ebola than non-traveling students.

4. Do not take extra measures (i.e., enhanced cleaning) to specifically address Ebola.

No extra cleaning measures need to occur in your facilities to specifically address Ebola; however, influenza and norovirus will most certainly be circulating in your schools over the winter months and should be the focus of your illness prevention and control efforts. To decrease these illnesses in your schools, do consider flu/norovirus enhanced cleaning, holding influenza vaccination clinics, and encouraging parents to keep their ill children home from school.

5. Do call public health officials to discuss any questions or concerns you have about Ebola.

Public health officials are responsible for providing sound, science-based information to community partners. Please contact your local or state public health officials if you have any questions or concerns.

6. Further information can be found at these websites:

www.idph.state.ia.us/EHI/Issue.aspx?issue=Ebola%20Outbreak&pg=Ebola%20Outbreak%20Home. (IDPH)
www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html (CDC)